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The mind which rejects them must reject every other species of proof, and is unable to comprehend any truth whatsoever.

Natural religion teaches us to hope for an hereafter. Revelation assures us of it. Natural religion teaches us to hope, that if a man repent, God will pardon. Jesus proclaimed remission of sins, i. e. he shewed, by the fact of inviting men to repent, that a conversion of the heart to God would be accepted by the Father of Mankind. I do not suppose that a person embracing Christianity without practising the virtues, would be happy; but he was put in the way of making the proper atonement, by the authoritative declaration of God's pardon in case of amendment. These, the two grand purposes of Christ's coming. 31st Dec. 1773.

Women are not dealt with justly by the laws of the land. All laws of inferiority should be repealed. Compact supposes equality.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

REMARKS ON THE "QUESTION AND ANSWER, FROM THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY."*

IN making a few remarks on this very extraordinary "question," and still more extraordinary "answer," I shall carefully avoid all sectarian controversy, and treat the subject on the most general principles of Christian religion. With the sincerest attachment to the cause of toleration and liberality, I am the more anxious that those mild doctrines should not be abused, to the injury of truth, and to the discredit of religious inquiry.

The "question" is raised on the supposition of an apparent contradiction in doctrine, between the apostles, fathers, councils, popes, synods, and assemblies, on the one hand; and Jesus and reason,* on the other. The *question* then is, with which should we endeavour to agree?

Whether this supposition of "Socrates the younger," has reference in his mind to any actual case, we are not told; but I think it due to the cause of truth and common sense, that such monstrous hypotheses should be distinctly set aside. What are we to think of the imagination, that Christ, of whose doctrine we know little, but through the writings of the apostles, was yet contradicted or misunderstood by those very apostles, though *they* were designed as the means of diffusing the knowledge of himself and his doctrine to the world? How shall we separate those parts of their writings, where our Saviour's own doctrine is given to us, from the erroneous comments of the apostles by whom it is reported? Must we admit nothing for genuine Christianity, but the four gospels; or, are we certain that the apostles of Christ were not commissioned by him to deliver any thing besides, as a part of the deposite of faith? To imagine *all* the fathers, councils, popes, synods, and assemblies, *agreeing* in an opinion contrary to the doctrine of Christ, is surely extravagant enough; but, to suppose the apostles of Christ, on whom his promised spirit descended, to "guide them unto ALL THE TRUTH," to have mistaken the doctrines they

* This quaint expression struck me as novel; and it may perhaps strike the reader of a *Christian taste*, as forming rather an unbecoming association with that name which is above all names.

* See Belfast Magazine, No. 75, page 277.

were commissioned to teach; to have stained, thus early, the purity of gospel truth, and corrupted the records of revelation, forms, altogether, a system so revolting in itself, so disheartening in its consequences, that it seems wonderful that the human, not to say the Christian, mind, could repose upon it. Surely, thus to separate Christ from the apostles whom he had chosen, to be the historians of his life, the promulgators of his doctrine, the agents of his power and the depositaries of his authority, goes directly, not alone to encourage scepticism in religion, but to subvert the foundations of Christianity itself! The "question" supposes a contradiction, at least apparent, between the doctrine of Christ, and the doctrine of the apostles, as if they were really distinct, and capable of being mutually compared; whereas, they are so interwoven and identified in the scriptures of the New Testament, as not to be distinguishable from each other. It may be, I do not sufficiently *understand* this hypothesis of an apparent collision of Christian authorities with "*Jesus and reason*," when I regard it as an unnatural and impossible supposition. The writer who signs himself a layman, quietly entertains the supposition of an apparent incompatibility, and gives the question a serious and singular solution. How far the younger Socrates, who unlike him of Greece, appears to have inquired, not to give, but to receive information, will feel satisfied with the reply of his lay neighbour, I cannot guess; but as the answer is offered also to the public, I hasten, as one, to record my dissent to its substance and principle.

According to the layman, opinions on religion, as well as on other subjects, being necessarily variable,

on account of the different education, tempers, and prejudices of men; and the wickedness and weakness of the human mind, rendering difficult the attainment of truth in religion; hence, "the reasonable religion of Jesus, consists not in any set of opinions whatsoever! but it *must be and is*, a living principle in the heart, constraining us to a belief and practice conformable to the known will of God, and beneficial to ourselves and others, &c." Among whom this *constraining principle*, (so compatible with all forms and creeds,) is to be found, or how it is to be known in one's self, or in others, might, I think, be matter of very serious difficulty, even if we were inclined to embrace the system of *religious indifference*, which this writer recommends.

And is it of no consequence what we believe? And does truth of doctrine form no part of Christian religion? The layman says not.

Now, with all due deference to freedom of judgment, I confess myself so warped by authorities in this important question, that I must withhold assent from the new position here laid down, till it appears better supported by argument. I am not prepared to prefer the dictum of this lay teacher, to the united wisdom of centuries. The various sects who have arisen since the birth of Christianity, have (I believe,) all agreed, that some set of opinions *did* constitute a part of religion. Were they all deceived in attributing so much to doctrines of faith? or is it only now that the true spirit and genius of Christianity, mistaken by all Christians from the apostles down, in every age and nation, has become known to the world? I cannot believe it is only *just now* we are beginning to understand the Christian system. I cannot believe the God of wisdom,

would publish by his son, a dispensation, of which the whole world, for eighteen centuries, was to misunderstand the nature and conditions.* Varieties in opinion there have been, and of course, many errors; but all Christians are agreed as to the reality and importance of that truth which was their common object.† If their eager search after truth, was so very vain and superfluous, may not the duties imposed by religion, (concerning which, there has been also great variance of opinion among Christians,) be deemed equally uncertain and unimportant? Under this extravagant and blind toleration, what systems of more or less latitude will you introduce, as pure and perfect Christianity? With regard to its founder, his mission, his origin, his nature, his atonement, his authority; how various and inconsistent the sentiments you will admit all equally doubtful, equally unimportant! With regard to man, his origin, his

nature, and destination, how many opinions must you admit, with equal and opposite claims to truth, all alike unconnected with the Christian religion, alike indifferent in the eyes of God. The spirituality and immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the divinity of Christ, his redemption of mankind, his resurrection, &c., are thus treated as doubtful, but unimportant questions; *difficiles nugæ*, not belonging to Christianity; which is thus reduced to a mere name, a profession of believing; *nothing*, even regarding the founder himself of that religion!

The consequence from all this would be, that truth and error are equally pleasing to God; that all sects, even of Jews and Mahometans, may be equally good Christians; and that all men (provided only they have the *constraining principle*,) may rest easy as to opinions, no matter how rashly taken up, or how unreasonably adhered to.

Deprecating, as I do, principles and results so injurious to the unity of Christian truth, and indeed, so discouraging to religious inquiry, I have thought it right, in their behalf, to enter my solemn protest in the pages of the Belfast Magazine.

C. C.

* The very novelty of these systems, is, in my mind, a sufficient confutation. Some modern writers seem to think that the science of religion is as much capable of improvement, as systems of human knowledge,

As if religion were intended,
For nothing else but to be mended!

I cannot help thinking, that if Christian truth be still a secret, it is not likely ever to be discovered.

† The variations and errors in doctrine, may prove that religious truth is difficult of attainment, not that it is unattainable. Many of these erroneous doctrines may arise from the wrong way in which the inquiry is made, and more through the neglect of any inquiry whatsoever. A very great portion of mankind are incapable of the examination; and those who have education and leisure, neglect it; either believing as their parents believe, or taking up their religion by accident.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

RAMBLE OF AN INQUISITIVE TRAVELLER.

(Continued from No. 73, page 111.)

NEAR the ruins of a church, in Ballycarry, resides one of those poets, who became so common in this kingdom, after the success of Robert Burns. The effusions of the above poet, who, "from thrashing straw, turned to thrash his brains,"